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The Pilgrims of the Rhine

Lytton, Edward Bulwer Lytton

London, 1834

Chapter XXIV.

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120544](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120544)

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BROTHERS.

THE banks of the Rhine now shelved away into sweeping plains, and on their right rose the once imperial city of Boppart. In no journey of similar length do you meet with such striking instances of the mutability and shifts of power. To find, as in the Memphian Egypt, a city sunk into a heap of desolate ruins; the hum, the roar, the mart of nations, hushed into the silence of ancestral tombs, is less humbling to our human vanity than to mark, as along the Rhine, the kingly city dwindled into the humble town or the dreary village; decay without its grandeur, change without the awe of its solitude! On the site on which Drusus raised his Roman tower, and the kings of the Franks their palaces, Trade now dribbles in tobacco-pipes, and transforms into an excellent cotton factory the antique nunnery of Koningsberg! So be it; it is the progressive order of things—the world itself will soon be one excellent cotton factory!

“Look!” said Trevelyman, as they sailed on, “at yonder mountain with its two traditionary CASTLES OF LIEBENSTEIN AND STERNFELS*.”

* *Vide* Illustrated Title.

Massive and huge the ruins swelled above the green rock, at the foot of which lay, in happier security from time and change, the clustered cottages of the peasant, with a single spire rising above the quiet village.

“Is there not, Albert, a celebrated legend attached to those castles?” said Gertrude, “I think I remember to have heard their name in connexion with your profession of tale-teller.”

“Yes,” said Trevylyan, “the story relates to the last lords of those shattered towers, and——”

“You will sit here, nearer to me, and begin,” interrupted Gertrude, in her tone of childlike command—
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THE BROTHERS.

A TALE*.

You must imagine, then, dear Gertrude, said Trevlyan, a beautiful summer day, and by the same faculty, that none possess so richly as yourself, for it is you who

* This tale is, in reality, founded on the beautiful tradition which belongs to Liebenstein and Sternfels.

can kindle something of that divine spark even in me, you must rebuild these shattered towers in the pomp of old; raise the gallery and the hall; man the battlement with warders, and give the proud banners of ancestral chivalry to wave upon the walls. But above, sloping half down the rock, you must fancy the hanging gardens of Liebenstein, redolent with flowers, and basking in the noonday sun.

On the greenest turf underneath an oak, there sate three persons, in the bloom of youth. Two of the three were brothers; the third was an orphan girl, whom the lord of the opposite Tower of Sternfels had bequeathed to the protection of his brother, the chief of Liebenstein. The castle itself and the demesne that belonged to it, passed away from the female line, and became the heritage of Otho, the orphan's cousin, and the younger of the two brothers now seated on the turf.

“And oh,” said the elder, whose name was Warbeck, “you have twined a chaplet for my brother; have you not, dearest Leoline, a simple flower for me?”

The beautiful orphan—(for beautiful she was, Gertrude, as the heroine of the tale you bid me tell ought to be,—should she not have to the dreams of my fancy your lustrous hair, and your sweet smile, and your eyes of blue, that are never, never silent? Ah, pardon me, that in a former tale, I denied the heroine the beauty of your face, and remember that, to atone for it, I endowed her with the beauty of your mind)—the beautiful orphan blushed to her temples, and culling from the flowers in her lap the freshest of the roses, began weaving them into a wreath for Warbeck.

“It would be better,” said the gay Otho, “to make my sober brother a chaplet of the rue and cypress; the rose is much too bright a flower for so serious a knight.”

Leoline held up her hand reprovingly.

“Let him laugh, dearest cousin,” said Warbeck, gazing passionately on her changing cheek; “and thou, Leoline, believe that the silent stream runs the deepest.”

At this moment, they heard the voice of the old chief, their father, calling aloud for Leoline; for ever, when he returned from the chace, he wanted her gentle presence; and the hall was solitary to him, if the light sound of her step, and the music of her voice, were not heard in welcome.

Leoline hastened to her guardian, and the brothers were left alone.

Nothing could be more dissimilar than the features and the respective characters of Otho and Warbeck. Otho's countenance was flushed with the brown hues of health; his eyes were of the brightest hazel; his dark hair wreathed in short curls round his open and fearless brow; the jest ever echoed on his lips, and his step was bounding as the foot of the hunter of the Alps. Bold and light was his spirit; and if at times he betrayed the haughty insolence of youth, he felt generously, and though not ever ready to confess sorrow for a fault, he was at least ready to brave peril for a friend.

But Warbeck's frame, though of equal strength, was more slender in its proportions than that of his brother; the fair long hair, that characterised his northern race, hung on either side of a countenance calm and pale, and deeply impressed with thought, even to sadness. His features, more

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majestic and regular than Otho's, rarely varied in their expression. More resolute even than Otho, he was less impetuous; more impassioned, he was also less capricious.

The brothers remained silent after Leoline had left them. Otho carelessly braced on his sword, that he had laid aside on the grass; but Warbeck gathered up the flowers that had been touched by the soft hand of Leoline, and placed them in his bosom.

The action disturbed Otho; he bit his lip, and changed colour; at length he said, with a forced laugh,—

“It must be confessed, brother, that you carry your affection for our fair cousin to a degree that even relationship seems scarcely to warrant.”

“It is true,” said Warbeck, calmly, “I love her with a love surpassing that of blood.”

“How,” said Otho, fiercely, “do you dare to think of Leoline as a bride?”

“Dare!” repeated Warbeck, turning yet paler than his wonted hue.

“Yes, I have said the word! Know, Warbeck, that I, too, love Leoline; I, too, claim her as my bride; and never, while I can wield a sword, never, while I wear the spurs of knighthood, will I render my claim to a living rival. Even,” he added, (sinking his voice,) “though that rival be my brother!”

Warbeck answered not; his very soul seemed stunned; he gazed long and wistfully on his brother, and then, turning his face away, ascended the rock without uttering a single word.

This silence startled Otho. Accustomed to vent every emotion of his own, he could not comprehend the forbearance of his brother; he knew his high and brave nature too well to imagine that it arose from fear. Might it not be contempt, or, might he not, at this moment, intend to seek their father; and, the first to proclaim his love for the orphan, advance, also, the privilege of the elder born. As these suspicions flashed across him, the haughty Otho strode to his brother's side, and laying his hand on his arm, said,—

“Whither goest thou; and dost thou consent to surrender Leoline?”

“Does she love thee, Otho?” answered Warbeck, breaking silence at last, and his voice spoke so deep an anguish, that it arrested the passions of Otho, even at their height.

“It is thou who art now silent,” continued Warbeck; “speak, doth she love thee, and has her lip confessed it?”

“I have believed that she loved me,” faltered Otho; “but she is of maiden bearing, and her lip, at least, has never told it.”

“Enough,” said Warbeck, “release your hold.”

“Stay,” said Otho, his suspicions returning; “stay—yet one word; dost thou seek my father. He ever honoured thee more than me; wilt thou own to him thy love, and insist on thy right of birth? By my soul and my hope of heaven, do it, and one of us two must fall!”

“Poor boy,” answered Warbeck, bitterly, “how little

thou canst read the heart of one who loves truly. Thinkest thou, I would wed her if she loved thee? Thinkest thou I could, even to be blest myself, give her one moment's pain? Out on the thought—away!”

“Then wilt not thou seek our father?” said Otho, abashed.

“Our father!—has our father the keeping of Leoline's affection?” answered Warbeck; and shaking off his brother's grasp, he sought the way to the castle.

As he entered the hall, the voice of Leoline thrilled upon him; she was singing to the old chief one of the simple ballads of the time, that the warrior and the hunter loved to hear. He paused lest he should break the spell, (a spell stronger than a sorcerer's to him,) and gazing upon Leoline's beautiful form, his heart sank within him. His brother and himself had each that day, as they sate in the gardens, given her a flower; *his* flower was the freshest and the rarest; his he saw not,—but she wore his brother's in her bosom!

The chief, lulled by the music and wearied with the toils of the chace, sank into sleep as the song ended, and Warbeck, coming forward, motioned to Leoline to follow him. He passed into a retired and solitary walk, and when they were a little distance from the castle, Warbeck turned round, and taking Leoline's hand gently, said—

“Let us rest here for one moment, dearest cousin; I have much on my heart to say to thee.”

“And what is there,” answered Leoline, as they sate on

a mossy bank, with the broad Rhine glancing below, "what is there that my kind Warbeck would ask of me? Ah! would it might be some favour, something in poor Leoline's power to grant; for ever from my birth you have been to me most tender, most kind. You, I have often heard them say, taught my first steps to walk; you formed my infant lips into language; and, in after years, when my wild cousin was far away in the forests at the chace, you would brave his gay jest and remain at home, lest Leoline should be weary in the solitude. Ah, would I could repay you!"

Warbeck turned away his cheek; his heart was very full, and it was some moments before he summoned courage to reply.

"My fair cousin," said he, "those were happy days; but they were the days of childhood. New cares and new thoughts have now come on us. But I am still thy friend, Leoline, and still thou wilt confide in me thy young sorrows and thy young hopes, as thou ever didst. Wilt thou not, Leoline?"

"Canst thou ask me?" said Leoline; and Warbeck, gazing on her face, saw that though her eyes were full of tears, they yet looked steadily upon his; and he knew that she loved him only as a sister.

He sighed, and paused again ere he resumed. "Enough," said he, "now to my task. Once on a time, dear cousin, there lived among these mountains a certain chief who had two sons, and an orphan like thyself dwelt also in his halls.

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And the elder son—but no matter, let us not waste words on *him!*—the younger son, then, loved the orphan dearly—more dearly than cousins love; and, fearful of refusal, he prayed the elder one to urge his suit to the orphan. Leoline, my tale is done. Canst thou not love Otho as he loves thee?”

And now lifting his eyes to Leoline, he saw that she trembled violently, and her cheek was covered with blushes.

“Say,” continued he, mastering himself; “is not that flower (his present) a token that he is chiefly in thy thoughts.”

“Ah, Warbeck! do not deem me ungrateful, that I wear not your’s also: but——”

“Hush!” said Warbeck, hastily; “I am but as thy brother, is not Otho more? He is young, brave, and beautiful. God grant that he may deserve thee, if thou givest him so rich a gift as thy affections.”

“I saw less of Otho in my childhood,” said Leoline, evasively; “therefore, his kindness of late years seemed stranger to me than thine.”

“And thou wilt not then reject him? Thou wilt be his bride?”

“And *thy* sister;” answered Leoline.

“Bless thee, mine own dear cousin; one brother’s kiss then, and farewell! Otho shall thank thee for himself.”

He kissed her forehead calmly, and turning away, plunged into the thicket; then—nor till then, he gave

vent to such emotions, as, had Leoline seen them, Otho's suit had been lost for ever; for passionately, deeply as in her fond and innocent heart she loved Otho, the *happiness* of Warbeck was not less dear to her.

When the young knight had recovered his self-possession he went in search of Otho. He found him alone in the wood, leaning with folded arms against a tree, and gazing moodily on the ground. Warbeck's noble heart was touched at his brother's dejection.

"Cheer thee, Otho," said he; "I bring thee no bad tidings; I have seen Leoline—I have conversed with her—nay start not—she loves thee! she is thine!"

"Generous—generous Warbeck!" exclaimed Otho; and he threw himself on his brother's neck. "No, no, said he, this must not be; thou hast the elder claim.—I resign her to thee. Forgive me my waywardness, brother, forgive me!"

"Think of the past no more," said Warbeck; "the love of Leoline is an excuse for greater offences than thine: and now, be kind to her; her nature is soft and keen. *I* know her well; for *I* have studied her faintest wish. Thou art hasty and quick of ire; but remember, that a word wounds where love is deep. For my sake as for hers, think more of her happiness than thine own; now seek her—she waits to hear from thy lips the tale that sounded cold upon mine."

With that he left his brother, and, once more re-entering the castle, he went into the hall of his ancestors. His father

still slept; he put his hand on his grey hair, and blessed him; then stealing up to his chamber, he braced on his helm and armour, and thrice kissing the hilt of his sword, said with a flushed cheek—

“Henceforth be *thou* my bride!” Then passing from the castle, he sped by the most solitary paths down the rock, gained the Rhine, and hailing one of the numerous fishermen of the river, won the opposite shore; and alone, but not sad, for his high heart supported him, and Leoline at least was happy, he hastened to Frankfort.

The town was all gaiety and life, arms clanged at every corner, the sounds of martial music, the wave of banners, the glittering of plumed casques, the neighing of war-steeds, all united to stir the blood and inflame the sense. St. Bertrand had lifted the sacred cross along the shores of the Rhine, and the streets of Frankfort witnessed with what success!

On that same day Warbeck assumed the sacred badge, and was enlisted among the knights of the Emperor Conrad.

We must suppose some time to have elapsed, and Otho and Leoline were not yet wedded; for in the first fervour of his gratitude to his brother, Otho had proclaimed to his father and to Leoline the conquest Warbeck had obtained over himself; and Leoline, touched to the heart, would not consent that the wedding should take place immediately. “Let him, at least,” said she, “not be insulted by a premature festivity, and give him time, amongst the lofty

beauties he will gaze upon in a far country, to forget, Otho, that he once loved her who is the beloved of thee."

The old chief applauded this delicacy; and even Otho, in the first flush of his feelings towards his brother, did not venture to oppose it. They settled, then, that the marriage should take place at the end of a year.

Months rolled away, and an absent and moody gloom settled upon Otho's brow. In his excursions with his gay companions among the neighbouring towns, he heard of nothing but the glory of the crusaders, of the homage paid to the heroes of the Cross by the courts they visited, of the adventure of their life, and the exciting spirit that animated their war. In fact, neither minstrel nor priest suffered the theme to grow cold; and the fame of those who had gone forth to the holy strife, gave at once emulation and discontent to the youths who had remained behind.

"And my brother enjoys this ardent and glorious life," said the impatient Otho; "while I, whose arm is as strong, and whose heart is as bold, languish here listening to the dull tales of a hoary sire and the silly songs of an orphan girl." His heart smote him at the last sentence, but he had already begun to weary of the gentle love of Leoline. Perhaps when he had no longer to gain a triumph over a rival, the excitement palled, or perhaps his proud spirit secretly chafed at being conquered by his brother in generosity, even when outshining him in the success of love.

But poor Leoline, once taught that she was to consider

Otho her betrothed, surrendered her heart entirely to his controul. His wild spirit, his dark beauty, his daring valour, won while they awed her; and in the fitfulness of his nature were those perpetual springs of hope and fear, that are the fountains of ever agitated love. She saw with increasing grief the change that was growing over Otho's mind; nor did she divine the cause. "Surely I have not offended him," thought she.

Among the companions of Otho was one who possessed a singular sway over him. He was a knight of that mysterious order of the Temple, which exercised at one time so great a command over the minds of men.

A severe and dangerous wound in a brawl with an English knight had confined the Templar at Frankfort, and prevented his joining the crusade. During his slow recovery he had formed an intimacy with Otho, and, taking up his residence at the castle of Liebenstein, had been struck with the beauty of Leoline. Prevented by his oath from marriage, he allowed himself a double licence in love, and doubted not, could he disengage the young knight from his betrothed, that she would add a new conquest to the many he had already achieved. Artfully therefore he painted to Otho the various attractions of the Holy Cause; and, above all, he failed not to describe, with glowing colours, the beauties, who, in the gorgeous East, distinguished with a prodigal favour the warriors of the Cross. Dowries, unknown in the more sterile mountains of the Rhine, accompanied the hand of these beauteous maidens, and even a prince's daughter was not

deemed, he said, too lofty a marriage for the heroes who might win kingdoms for themselves.

“To me,” said the Templar, “such hopes are eternally denied. But you, were you not already betrothed, what fortunes might await you !”

By such discourses the ambition of Otho was perpetually aroused; they served to deepen his discontent at his present obscurity, and to convert to distaste the only solace it afforded in the innocence and affection of Leoline.

One night, a minstrel sought shelter from the storm in the halls of Liebenstein. His visit was welcomed by the chief, and he repaid the hospitality he had received by the exercise of his art. He sung of the chace, and the gaunt hound started from the hearth. He sung of love, and Otho, forgetting his restless dreams, approached to Leoline, and laid himself at her feet. Louder then and louder rose the strain. The minstrel sung of war; he painted the feats of the crusaders; he plunged into the thickest of the battle; the steed neighed; the trump sounded; and you might have heard the ringing of the steel. But when he came to signalise the names of the boldest knights, high among the loftiest sounded the name of Sir Warbeck of Liebenstein. Thrice had he saved the imperial banner; two chargers slain beneath him, he had covered their bodies with the fiercest of the foe. Gentle in the tent and terrible in the fray, the minstrel should forget his craft ere the Rhine should forget its hero. The chief started from his seat. Leoline clasped the minstrel's hand.

“Speak, you have seen him, he lives, he is honoured?”

“I, myself, am but just from Palestine, brave chief and noble maiden. I saw the gallant knight of Liebenstein at the right hand of the imperial Conrad. And he, ladye, was the only knight whom admiration shone upon without envy, its shadow. Who then, (continued the minstrel, once more striking his harp,) who then would remain inglorious in the hall? Shall not the banners of his sires reproach him as they wave; and shall not every voice from Palestine strike shame into his soul?”

“Right,” cried Otho, suddenly, and flinging himself at the feet of his father. “Thou hearest what my brother has done, and thine aged eyes weep tears of joy. Shall I only dishonour thine old age with a rusted sword.—No! grant me like my brother to go forth with the heroes of the Cross!”

“Noble youth,” cried the harper, “therein speaks the soul of Sir Warbeck; hear him, Sir Knight; hear the noble youth.”

“The voice of Heaven cries aloud in his voice,” said the Templar, solemnly.

“My son, I cannot chide thine ardour,” said the old chief, raising him with trembling hands; “but Leoline, thy betrothed!”

Pale as a statue, with ears that doubted their sense as they drank in the cruel words of her lover, stood the orphan. She did not speak, she scarcely breathed; she sank into her seat, and gazed upon the ground, till, at the speech of

the chief, both maiden pride and maiden tenderness restored her consciousness, and she said—

“*I*, uncle; shall *I* bid Otho stay, when his wishes bid him depart?”

“He will return to thee, noble ladye, covered with glory,” said the harper: but Otho said no more. The touching voice of Leoline went to his soul; he resumed his seat in silence; and Leoline, going up to him, whispered gently, “Act as though I were not;” and left the hall to commune with her heart and to weep alone.

“I can wed her before I go,” said Otho suddenly, as he sate that night in the Templar’s chamber.

“Why, that is true! and leave thy bride in the first week—a hard trial.”

“Better than incur the chance of never calling her mine.—Dear, kind, beloved Leoline!”

“Assuredly she deserves all from thee; and, indeed, it is no small sacrifice, at thy years and with thy mien, to renounce for ever all interest among the noble maidens thou wilt visit. Ah, from the galleries of Constantinople what eyes will look down on thee, and what ears, learning that thou art Otho the bridegroom, will turn away, caring for thee no more. A bridegroom without a bride! Nay, man, much as the Cross wants warriors, I am enough thy friend to tell thee, if thou weddest, stay peaceably at home, and forget in the chace the labours of war, from which thou wouldst strip the ambition of love.”

“I would I knew what were best,” said Otho irresolutely.

“My brother — ha, shall he for ever outshine me! — but Leoline, how will she grieve — she who left him for me!”

“Was that thy fault?” said the Templar gaily. “It may many times chance to thee again to be preferred to another. Troth, it is a sin that the conscience may walk lightly enough under. But sleep on it, Otho; my eyes grow heavy.”

The next day Otho sought Leoline, and proposed to her that their wedding should precede his parting, but so embarrassed was he, so divided between two wishes, that Leoline, offended, hurt, stung by his coldness, refused the proposal at once; she left him lest he should see her weep, and then — then she repented even of her just pride!

But Otho, striving to appease his conscience with the belief that her's now was the *sole* fault, busied himself in preparations for his departure. Anxious to outshine his brother, he departed not as Warbeck, alone and unattended, but levying all the horse, men, and money that his domain of Sternfels — which he had not yet tenanted — would afford, he repaired to Frankfort at the head of a glittering troop.

The Templar, affecting a relapse, tarried behind, and promised to join him at that Constantinople of which he had so loudly boasted. Meanwhile he devoted his whole powers of pleasing to console the unhappy orphan. The force of her simple love was, however, stronger than all his arts. In vain he insinuated doubts of Otho; she refused to

hear them: in vain he poured with the softest accents into her ear the witchery of flattery and song: she turned heedlessly away; and only pained by the courtesies that had so little resemblance to Otho, she shut herself up in her chamber, and pined in solitude for her forsaker.

The Templar now resolved to attempt darker arts to obtain power over her, when fortunately he was summoned suddenly away by a mission from the Grand Master, of so high import, that it could not be resisted by a passion stronger in his breast than love—the passion of ambition. He left the castle to its solitude; and Otho peopling it no more with his gay companions, no solitude *could* be more unfrequently disturbed.

Meanwhile though, ever and anon, the fame of Warbeck reached their ears, it came unaccompanied with that of Otho; of him they heard no tidings: and thus the love of the tender orphan was kept alive by the perpetual restlessness of fear. At length the old chief died, and Leoline was left utterly alone.

One evening as she sate with her maidens in the hall, the ringing of a steed's hoofs was heard in the outer court; a horn sounded, the heavy gates were unbarred, and a knight of a stately mien and covered with the red mantle of the Cross entered the hall; he stopped for one moment at the entrance, as if overpowered by his emotions; in the next he had clasped Leoline to his breast!

“Dost thou not recognise thy cousin Warbeck?” He doffed his casque, and she saw that majestic brow which,

unlike Otho's, had never changed or been clouded in its aspect to her.

"The war is suspended for the present," said he. "I learnt my father's death, and I have returned home to hang up my banner in the hall, and spend my days in peace."

Time and the life of camps had worked their change upon Warbeck's face; the fair hair, deepened in its shade, was worn from the temples, and disclosed one scar that rather aided the beauty of a countenance that had always something high and martial in its character; but the calm it once wore had settled down into sadness; he conversed more rarely than before, and though he smiled not less often, or less kindly, the smile had more of thought, and the kindness had forgot its passion. He had apparently conquered a love that was so early crossed, but not that fidelity of remembrance which made Leoline dearer to him than all others, and forbade him to replace the images he had graven upon his soul.

The orphan's lips trembled with the name of Otho, but a certain recollection stifled even her anxiety. Warbeck hastened to forestall her questions.

"Otho was well," he said, "and sojourning at Constantinople; he had lingered there so long that the crusade had terminated without his aid; doubtless now he would speedily return—a month, a week, nay, a day, might restore him to her side."

Leoline was inexpressibly consoled, yet something seemed untold. Why, so eager for the strife of the sacred

Tomb, had he thus tarried at Constantinople? She wondered, she wearied conjecture, but she did not dare to search farther.

The generous Warbeck concealed from her that Otho led a life of the most reckless and indolent dissipation; wasting his wealth in the pleasures of the Greek court, and only occupying his ambition with the wild schemes of founding a principality in those foreign climes, which the enterprises of the Norman adventurers had rendered so alluring to the knightly bandits of the age.

The cousins resumed their old friendship, and Warbeck believed that it was friendship alone. They walked again among the gardens in which their childhood had strayed; they sate again on the green turf whereon they had woven flowers; they looked down on the eternal mirror of the Rhine;—ah! could it have reflected the same unawakened freshness of their life's early spring!

The grave and contemplative mind of Warbeck had not been so contented with the honours of war, but that it had sought also those calmer sources of emotion which were yet found among the sages of the east. He had drunk at the fountain of the wisdom of those distant climes, and had acquired the habits of meditation which were indulged by those wiser tribes from which the crusaders brought back to the north the knowledge that was destined to enlighten their posterity. Warbeck, therefore, had little in common with the ruder chiefs around; he summoned them not to his board, or attended at their noisy wassails. Often late

at night, in yon shattered tower, his lonely lamp shone still over the mighty stream, and his only relief to loneliness was the presence and the song of his soft cousin.

Months rolled on, when suddenly a vague and fearful rumour reached the castle of Liebenstein. Otho was returning home to the neighbouring tower of Sternfels; but not alone. He brought back with him a Greek bride of surprising beauty, and dowered with almost regal wealth. Leoline was the first to discredit the rumour; Leoline was soon the only one who disbelieved.

Bright in the summer noon flashed the array of horsemen; far up the steep ascent wound the gorgeous cavalcade; the lonely towers of Liebenstein heard the echo of many a laugh and peal of merriment. Otho bore home his bride to the hall of Sternfels.

That night there was a great banquet in Otho's castle; the lights shone from every casement, and music swelled loud and ceaselessly within.

By the side of Otho, glittering with the prodigal jewels of the East, sate the Greek. Her dark locks, her flashing eye, the false colours of her complexion, dazzled the eyes of her guests. On her left hand sate the Templar.

"By the holy rood," quoth the Templar gaily, though he crossed himself as he spoke, "we shall scare the owls to night on those grim towers of Liebenstein. Thy grave brother, Sir Otho, will have much to do to comfort his cousin when she sees what a gallant life she would have led with thee."

"Poor damsel!" said the Greek, with affected pity,

"doubtless she will now be reconciled to the rejected one. I hear he is a knight of a comely mien."

"Peace!" said Otho, sternly, and quaffing a large goblet of wine.

The Greek bit her lip, and glanced meaningly at the Templar, who returned the glance.

"Nought but a beauty such as thine can win my pardon," said Otho, turning to his bride, and gazing passionately in her face.

The Greek smiled.

Well sped the feast, the laugh deepened, the wine circled, when Otho's eye rested on a guest at the bottom of the board, whose figure was mantled from head to foot, and whose face was covered by a dark veil.

"Beshrew me," said he aloud; "but this is scarce courteous at our revel; will the stranger vouchsafe to unmask?"

These words turned all eyes to the figure, and they who sate next it perceived that it trembled violently; at length it rose, and walking slowly, but with grace, to the fair Greek, it laid beside her a wreath of flowers.

"It is a simple gift, ladye," said the stranger, in a voice of such sweetness, that the rudest guest was touched by it. "But it is all I can offer, and the bride of Otho should not be without a gift at my hands. May ye both be happy!"

With these words, the stranger turned and passed from the hall silent as a shadow.

"Bring back the stranger!" cried the Greek, recovering

her surprise. Twenty guests sprang up to obey her mandate.

“No, no!” said Otho, waving his hand impatiently; “Touch her not, heed her not at your peril.”

The Greek bent over the flowers to conceal her anger, and from amongst them dropped the broken half of a ring. Otho recognised it at once; it was the half of that ring which he had broken with his betrothed. Alas, he required not such a sign to convince him, that that figure so full of ineffable grace, that touching voice, that simple action so tender in its sentiment, that gift, that blessing, came only from the forsaken and forgiving Leoline!

But Warbeck, alone in his solitary tower, paced to and fro with agitated steps. Deep, undying wrath at his brother's baseness, mingled with one burning, one delicious hope. He confessed now that he had deceived himself when he thought his passion was no more; was there any longer a bar to his union with Leoline?

In that delicacy which was breathed into him by his love, he had forborne to seek, or to offer her the insult of, consolation. He felt that the shock should be borne alone, and yet he pined, he thirsted, to throw himself at her feet.

Nursing these contending thoughts, he was aroused by a knock at his door; he opened it—the passage was thronged by Leoline's maidens; pale, anxious, weeping. Leoline had left the castle, but with one female attendant; none knew whither;—they knew too soon. From the hall

of Sternfels she had passed over in the dark and inclement night, to the valley in which the convent of Bornhofen offered to the weary of spirit and the broken of heart, a refuge at the shrine of God.

At daybreak, the next morning, Warbeck was at the convent's gate. He saw Leoline: what a change one night of suffering had made in that face, which was the fountain of all loveliness to him. He clasped her in his arms; he wept; he urged all that love could urge: he besought her to accept that heart, which had never wronged her memory by a thought. "Oh Leoline, didst thou not say once that these arms nursed thy childhood; that this voice soothed thine early sorrows! Ah, trust to them again and for ever. From a love that forsook thee turn to the love that never swerved."

"No," said Leoline; "No. What would the chivalry of which thou art the boast; what would they say of thee, if thou weddest one affianced and deserted, who tarried years for another, and brought to thine arms only that heart which he had abandoned? No; and even if thou, as I know thou wouldst be, wert callous to such wrong of thy high name, shall I bring to thee a broken heart, and bruised spirit? shalt thou wed sorrow and not joy? and shall sighs that will not cease, and tears that may not be dried, be the only dowry of thy bride? Thou, too, for whom all blessings should be ordained? No, forget me; forget thy poor Leoline! She hath nothing but prayers for thee."

In vain Warbeck pleaded; in vain he urged all that passion and truth could urge; the springs of earthly love were for ever dried up in the orphan's heart, and her resolution was immoveable—she tore herself from his arms, and the gate of the convent creaked harshly on his ear.

A new and stern emotion now wholly possessed him; naturally mild and gentle, when once aroused to anger, he cherished it with the strength of a calm mind. Leo-line's tears, her sufferings, her wrongs, her uncomplaining spirit, the change already stamped upon her face, all cried aloud to him for vengeance. "She is an orphan," said he, bitterly; "she hath none to protect, to redress her, save me alone. My father's charge over her forlorn youth descends of right to me. What matters it whether her forsaker be my brother? he is *her* foe. Hath he not crushed her heart? Hath he not consigned her to sorrow till the grave? And with what insult; no warning, no excuse; with lewd wassailers keeping revel for his new bridals in the hearing,—before the sight,—of his betrothed. Enough! the time hath come, when, to use his own words, 'One of us two must fall!'" He half drew his glaive as he spoke, and thrusting it back violently into the sheath, strode home to his solitary castle. The sound of steeds and of the hunting horn met him at his portal; the bridal train of Sternfels, all mirth and gladness, were panting for the chase.

That evening a knight in complete armour entered the banquet-hall of Sternfels, and defied Otho, on the part of Warbeck of Liebenstein, to mortal combat.

Even the Templar was startled by so unnatural a challenge; but Otho, reddening, took up the gage, and the day and spot were fixed. Discontented, wroth with himself, a savage gladness seized him;—he longed to wreak his desperate feelings even on his brother. Nor had he ever in his jealous heart forgiven that brother his virtues and his renown.

At the appointed hour the brothers met as foes. Warbeck's visor was up, and all the settled sternness of his soul was stamped upon his brow. But Otho, more willing to brave the arm than to face the front of his brother, kept his visor down; the Templar stood by him with folded arms. It was a study in human passions to his mocking mind. Scarce had the first trump sounded to this dread conflict, when a new actor entered on the scene. The rumour of so unprecedented an event had not failed to reach the convent of Bornhofen;—and now, two by two, came the sisters of the holy shrine, and the armed men made way, as with trailing garments and veiled faces they swept along into the very lists. At that moment one from amongst them left her sisters, and with a slow majestic pace, paused not till she stood right between the brother foes.

“Warbeck,” she said in a hollow voice, that curdled up his dark spirit as it spoke, “is it thus thou wouldst prove thy love, and maintain thy trust over the fatherless orphan that thy sire bequeathed to thy care? Shall I have murder on my soul?” At that question she paused, and those who heard it, were struck dumb and shuddered. “The murder

of one man by the hand of his own brother!—Away, Warbeck! *I command.*”

“Shall I forget thy wrongs, Leoline?” said Warbeck.

“Wrongs! they united me to God! they are forgiven, they are no more; earth has deserted me, but heaven hath taken me to its arms;—shall I murmur at the change? And thou, Otho—(here her voice faltered)—thou, does thy conscience smite thee not—wouldst thou atone for robbing me of hope by barring against me the future? Wretch that I should be, could I dream of mercy—could I dream of comfort, if thy brother fell by thy sword in my cause? Otho, I have pardoned thee, and blessed thee and thine. Once, perhaps, thou didst love me; remember how I loved thee—cast down thine arms.”

Otho gazed at the veiled form before him. Where had the soft Leoline learned to command!—He turned to his brother; he felt all that he had inflicted upon both; and casting his sword upon the ground, he knelt at the feet of Leoline, and kissed her garment with a devotion that votary never lavished on a holier saint.

The spell that lay over the warriors around was broken; there was one loud cry of congratulation and joy. “And thou, Warbeck!” said Leoline, turning to the spot where, still motionless and haughty, Warbeck stood.

“Have I ever rebelled against thy will?” said he, softly; and buried the point of his sword in the earth.—“Yet, Leoline, yet,” added he, looking at his kneeling brother, “yet art thou already better avenged than by this steel!”

“Thou art! thou art!” cried Otho, smiting his breast; and slowly, and scarce noting the crowd that fell back from his path, Warbeck left the lists.

Leoline said no more; her divine errand was fulfilled; she looked long and wistfully after the stately form of the knight of Liebenstein, and then, with a slight sigh, she turned to Otho; “This is the last time we shall meet on earth. Peace be with us all.”

She then, with the same majestic and collected bearing, passed on towards the sisterhood; and as, in the same solemn procession, they glided back towards the convent, there was not a man present, no, not even the hardened Templar, who would not, like Otho, have bent his knee to Leoline.

Once more Otho plunged into the wild revelry of the age; his castle was thronged with guests, and night after night the lighted halls shone down athwart the tranquil Rhine. The beauty of the Greek, the wealth of Otho, the fame of the Templar, attracted all the chivalry from far and near. Never had the banks of the Rhine known so hospitable a lord as the knight of Sternfels. Yet gloom seized him in the midst of gladness, and the revel was welcome only as the escape from remorse. The voice of scandal, however, soon began to mingle with that of envy at the pomp of Otho. The fair Greek, it was said, weary of her lord, lavished her smiles on others; the young and the fair were always most acceptable at the castle; and, above all, her guilty love for the Templar scarcely affected disguise. Otho

alone appeared unconscious of the rumour; and though he had begun to neglect his bride, he relaxed not in his intimacy with the Templar.

It was noon, and the Greek was sitting in her bower alone with her suspected lover; the rich perfumes of the East mingled with the fragrance of flowers, and various luxuries, unknown till then in those northern shores, gave a soft and effeminate character to the room.

"I tell thee," said the Greek petulantly, "that he begins to suspect; that I have seen him watch thee, and mutter as he watched, and play with the hilt of his dagger. Better let us fly ere it is too late, for his vengeance would be terrible were it once roused against us. Ah, why did I ever forsake my own sweet land for these barbarous shores! There, love is not considered eternal, and inconstancy a crime worthy death."

"Peace, pretty one," said the Templar carelessly; "thou knowest not the laws of our foolish chivalry. Thinkest thou I could fly from a knight's halls like a thief in the night? Why verily, even the red cross would not cover such dishonour. If thou fearest that thy dull lord suspects, why let us part. The emperor hath sent to me from Frankfort. Ere evening I might be on my way thither."

"And I left to brave the barbarian's revenge alone? Is this thy chivalry?"

"Nay, prate not so wildly," answered the Templar. "Surely, when the object of his suspicion is gone, thy woman's art and thy Greek wiles can easily allay the jealous

fiend. Do I not know thee, Glycera? Why thou wouldst fool all men—save a Templar.”

“And thou, cruel, wouldst thou leave me?” said the Greek weeping, “how shall I live without thee?”

The Templar laughed slightly. “Can such eyes ever weep without a comforter? But farewell; I must not be found with thee. To-morrow I depart for Frankfort; we shall meet again.”

As soon as the door closed on the Templar, the Greek rose, and pacing the room, said, “Selfish, selfish; how could I ever trust him? Yet I dare not brave Otho alone. Surely it was his step that disturbed us in our yesterday’s interview. Nay, I will fly. I can never want a companion.”

She clapped her hands; a young page appeared; she threw herself on her seat and wept bitterly.

The page approached, and love was mingled with his compassion.

“Why weepst thou, dearest lady?” said he; “is there aught in which Conrade’s services—services—ah, thou hast read his heart—*his devotion* may avail?”

Otho had wandered out the whole day alone; his vassals had observed that his brow was more gloomy than its wont, for he usually concealed whatever might prey within. Some of the most confidential of his servitors he had conferred with, and the conference had deepened the shadow on his countenance. He returned at twilight; the Greek did not honour the repast with her presence. She was

unwell, and not to be disturbed. The gay Templar was the life of the board.

“Thou carriest a sad brow to-day, Sir Otho,” said he; “good faith, thou hast caught it from the air of Liebenstein.”

“I have something troubles me,” answered Otho, forcing a smile, “which I would fain impart to thy friendly bosom. The night is clear and the moon is up, let us forth alone into the garden.”

The Templar rose, and he forgot not to gird on his sword as he followed the knight.

Otho led the way to one of the most distant terraces that overhung the Rhine.

“Sir Templar,” said he, pausing, “answer me one question on thy knightly honour. Was it thy step that left my lady’s bower yester eve at vesper?”

Startled by so sudden a query, the wily Templar faltered in his reply.

The red blood mounted to Otho’s brow; “Nay, lie not, sir knight; these eyes, thanks to God, have not witnessed, but these ears have heard from others of, my dishonour.”

As Otho spoke, the Templar’s eye, resting on the water, perceived a boat rowing fast over the Rhine; the distance forbade him to see more than the outline of two figures within it. “She was right,” thought he; “perhaps that boat already bears her from the danger.”

Drawing himself up to the full height of his tall stature, the Templar replied haughtily—

“Sir Otho of Sternfels, if thou hast deigned to question thy vassals, obtain from them only an answer. It is not to contradict such minions that the knights of the Temple pledge their word.”

“Enough,” cried Otho, losing patience, and striking the Templar with his clenched hand, “Draw, traitor, draw.”

Alone in his lofty tower Warbeck watched the night deepen over the heavens, and communed mournfully with himself. “To what end,” thought he, “have these strong affections, these capacities of love, this yearning after sympathy, been given me? Unloved and unknown I walk to my grave, and all the nobler mysteries of my heart are for ever to be untold.”

Thus musing, he heard not the challenge of the warder on the wall, or the unbarring of the gate below, or the tread of footsteps along the winding stair; the door was thrown suddenly open, and Otho stood before him. “Come,” he said, in a low voice trembling with passion; “Come, I will show thee that which shall glad thine heart. Twofold is Leoline avenged.”

Warbeck looked in amazement on a brother he had not met since they stood in arms each against the other's life, and he now saw that the arm that Otho extended to him dripped with blood, trickling drop by drop upon the floor.

“Come,” said Otho, “follow me; it is my last prayer. Come, for Leoline's sake, come.”

At that name Warbeck hesitated no longer; he girded

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on his sword, and followed his brother down the stairs and through the castle gate. The porter scarcely believed his eyes when he saw the two brothers, so long divided, go forth at that hour alone, and seemingly in friendship.

Warbeck, arrived at that epoch in the feelings when nothing stuns, followed with silent steps the rapid strides of his brother. The two castles, as you are aware, are scarce a stone's throw from each other. In a few minutes Otho paused at an open space in one of the terraces of Sternfels, on which the moon shone bright and steady. "Behold," he said, in a ghastly voice, "behold!" and Warbeck saw on the sward the corpse of the Templar, bathed with the blood that even still poured fast and warm from his heart.

"Hark!" said Otho. "He it was who first made me waver in my vows to Leoline; he persuaded me to wed you with falsehood. Hark! he, who had thus wronged my real love, dishonoured me with my faithless bride, and thus—thus—thus"—as grinding his teeth, he spurned again and again the dead body of the Templar—"thus Leoline and myself are avenged!"

"And thy wife?" said Warbeck, pityingly.

"Fled—fled with a hireling page. It is well! she was not worth the sword that was once belted on—by Leoline."

The tradition, dear Gertrude, proceeds to tell us that Otho, though often menaced by the rude justice of the

day for the death of the Templar, defied and escaped the menace. On the very night of his revenge a long delirious illness seized him; the generous Warbeck forgave, forgot all, save that he had been once consecrated by Leoline's love. He tended him through his sickness, and, when he recovered, Otho was an altered man. He forswore the comrades he had once courted, the revels he had once led. The halls of Sternfels were desolate as those of Liebenstein. The only companion Otho sought was Warbeck, and Warbeck bore with him. They had no subject in common, for on one subject Warbeck at least felt too deeply ever to trust himself to speak; yet did a strange and secret sympathy reunite them. They had at least a common sorrow; often they were seen wandering together by the solitary banks of the river, or amidst the woods, without apparently interchanging word or sign. Otho died first, and still in the prime of youth; and Warbeck was now left companionless. In vain the imperial court wooed him to its pleasures; in vain the camp proffered him the oblivion of renown. Ah! could he tear himself from a spot where morning and night he could see afar, amidst the valley, the roof that sheltered Leoline, and on which every copse, every turf, reminded him of former days? His solitary life, his midnight vigils, strange scrolls about his chamber, obtained him by degrees the repute of cultivating the darker arts; and shunning, he became shunned by, all. But still it was sweet to hear from time to time of the

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increasing sanctity of her in whom he had garnered up his lost thoughts of earth. She it was who healed the sick; she it was who relieved the poor; and the superstition of that age brought pilgrims from afar to the altars that she served.

Many years afterwards, a band of lawless robbers, who, ever and anon, broke from their mountain fastnesses, to pillage, and to desolate the valleys of the Rhine; who spared neither sex nor age; neither tower nor hut; nor even the houses of God himself; laid waste the territories round Bornhofen, and demanded treasure from the convent. The abbess, of the bold lineage of Rudesheim, refused the sacrilegious demand; the convent was stormed; its vassals resisted; the robbers, enured to slaughter, won the day; already the gates were forced, when a knight at the head of a small but hardy troop, rushed down from the mountain side, and turned the tide of the fray. Wherever his sword flashed, fell a foe. Wherever his war-cry sounded, was a space of dead men in the thick of the battle. The fight was won; the convent saved; the abbess and their sisterhood came forth to bless their deliverer. Laid under an aged oak, he was bleeding fast to death; his head was bare and his locks were grey, but scarcely yet with years. One only of the sisterhood recognised that majestic face; one bathed his parched lips; one held his dying hand; and in Leoline's presence past away the faithful spirit of the last Lord of Liebenstein!

“Oh!” said Gertrude, through her tears, “surely you must have altered the facts,—surely—surely—it must have been impossible for Leoline, with a woman’s heart, to have loved Otho more than Warbeck?”

“My child,” said Vane, “so think women when they read a tale of love, and see *the whole heart* bared before them; but not so act they in real life—when they see only the surface of character, and pierce not its depths—until it is too late!”

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